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FINE ARTS
READING ROOM

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COMMODORE
OLIVER HAZARD
PERRY

by JOHN WESLEY
JARVIS,

AMERICAN (1781-1840)
Gift of Dexter M.
Ferry, Jr., 1950



EDITORIAL

In this issue of the Bulletin we describe a number of new acquisitions which are of special interest in the year of Detroit's 250th birthday. A painting of fur traders by Bingham, the gift of Mr. Dexter M. Ferry, Jr., is a vivid document of the *coureurs de bois* and the fur trade from which Detroit sprang. A portrait of *Oliver Hazard Perry* by Jarvis, likewise a gift of Mr. Ferry, commemorates the man whose naval victory made Detroit an American city.

During the coming summer we shall hold an important loan exhibition in honor of the 250th birthday, to be called *The French in America*. The exhibition will trace the story of the part France has played in the settlement of North America and the rise of the American nation, as it is recorded in the arts. It will include the story of the French settlements on the St. Lawrence, the life of old Canada and early Detroit, the fur trade and the diffusion of French influence into the interior of the continent, the part played by the Huguenots in the American colonies, the French alliance that turned the balance in the War of Independence, and finally the work of the French-born artists who, like Audubon for example, became part of the life of the new nation.

In late May there was a retrospective exhibition of the work of Lendall Pitts, an artist of an old Detroit family who passed most of his life in France and is a link between Detroit and French culture in the early twentieth century. This exhibition was the second undertaken jointly by the Art Institute and the Detroit Historical Society in an exploration of the history of the arts in this city.

During the summer, concurrently with the exhibition of *The French in America*, we shall hold a loan exhibition of painters, sculptors and craftsmen of Detroit, 1901-1951. Thus we salute the past in the achievements of the past.

What of Detroit of today, in 1951 and in the future?

In 1801, one hundred years old, Detroit was the little fur trading post of some three hundred houses so well described in Mr. F. Clever Bald's excellent book; a frontier post so remote that for years it seemed hardly possible, or worth while, for the United States to establish possession.

In 1901, two hundred years old, Detroit was a beautiful little American city in which life, mellowed still by the inheritance of French gaiety, was delightful to live; a quiet, charming and provincial little city, still far from the center of things.

In 1951 Detroit is a huge, smoking, tough, able, competent city, one of the world's great centers of technology and one of the most interesting cities of the world today (although Detroit is the one place that does not know it). Interesting not for its beauty but because it is a focus of the great industrial and technological forces that are forging a new world, and which can be seen here in all their giant power and in all their giant problems. You have to be interested in the twentieth century to be interested in Detroit of 1951. It is a grim century, rather a frighten-

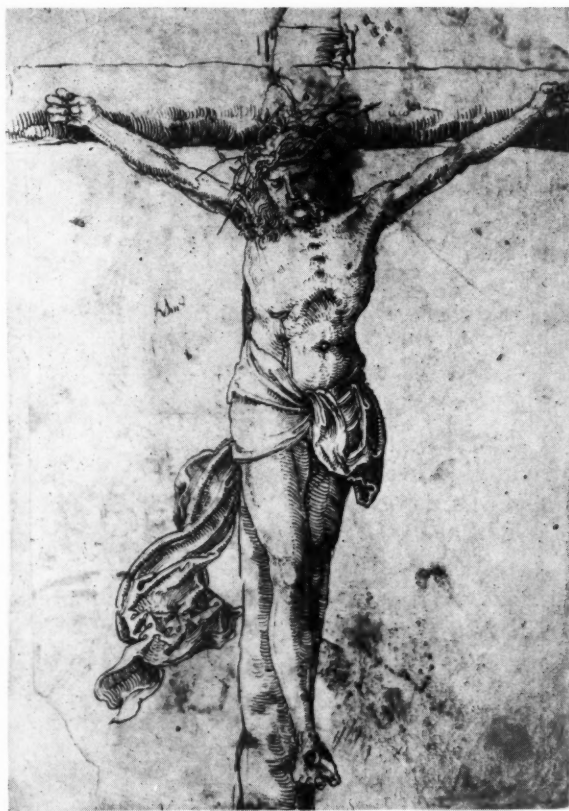
ing one, but no one can say that it is not interesting. And in that century, Detroit is no longer a remote outpost, or on the quiet provincial fringes, but at the center.

In the center of driving energy of our time, there is also vigorous thought, vigorous creative life, as we have said before and will say again. The creative life of this city is not exotic, like an orchid flown in by special plane for a party; it is in the form of modest new flowers springing up here and there in the most unexpected places out of the unconscious rich soil of the city's life. We look forward to what will come out of the strong inner drive of this community's life in the next half century and hope that we can play some part in it ourselves.

E. P. RICHARDSON

A DRAWING by HANS BALDUNG GRIEN

The Museum purchased last year through the Charles L. Freer Fund a drawing in pen and brown ink, representing Christ on the Cross¹, which is attributed to Dürer's contemporary, Hans Baldung Grien, who was born about 1480 at Wegersheim near Strasbourg and died in 1545. Noted as a painter,



CHRIST ON THE CROSS by HANS BALDUNG GRIEN, GERMAN, ca. 1480-1545
Gift of the Charles L. Freer Fund, 1950

engraver, designer of glass, and prolific designer of woodcuts, Hans Baldung owed much to Dürer in his development, but as in the case of Dürer himself most probably derived his earliest inspiration from the art of Schongauer. It might be said that a genial adaptation of Dürer's treatment of form generally characterizes Baldung's style in his prints and drawing as well as in his accomplishments in other fields.

The present drawing, which was discovered a year ago in London², is surely by the same hand which executed the "Man of Sorrows"³ in the museum at Budapest, a drawing which was first attributed by K. T. Parker to Baldung. Likewise, our drawing bears striking similarities both in technique and pose to another drawing, a sheet of four studies of "Christ on the Cross," in the Louvre in Paris.⁴ The Louvre version is assigned by Wescher⁴ to Baldung on the strength of its resemblance to Baldung's woodcut of the "Crucifixion." Wescher goes on to say in words which might equally well apply to the drawing in Detroit: "Not only is its general feeling of form very similar to that of the work mentioned, certain peculiarities of drawing are seen to recur, as, for instance, the sideways turn of the limbs, a feature which is by no means really motivated and which may be looked upon as a peculiarity characteristic of the master. His hand, moreover, betrays itself clearly on observing the shaded passages indicated by a series of more or less parallel curved lines occurring in particular on the beams of the Cross. From the fact that the drawing shows obvious reminiscences of Dürer's style, one may assume that it antedates the other representation of the Crucifixion alluded to above, and belongs to the period about or before 1508-9; in other words, to the time about or before the master's return to Strasbourg from Nuremberg. That would explain, too, why the figure of Christ . . . recalls the celebrated Crucifix of Veit Stoss, at Nuremberg, the forceful and dramatic expression of which seems to have exercised a definite influence on the younger artist." We may safely date the Detroit drawing during the same years.

On the reverse of the example at hand appears a sketch of a standing figure and three heads, one of which is freely copied from Dürer's early woodcut of "Christ Shown to the People" (B. 9). Four heads by an obviously later hand have been added on the reverse.

Aside from a torn section of paper at the lower left corner of the drawing and one or two portions which are slightly rubbed, especially around the head and left shoulder, the Detroit "Christ on the Cross" is in excellent state of preservation and comes down to us as a distinguished example of early 16th Century German draughtsmanship.

JOHN S. NEWBERRY, JR.

¹ Acc. no. 50.73. Height 11 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches; width 8 inches. Gift of the Founders Society, Charles L. Freer Fund.

² "Catalogue of an Exhibition of Old Master Drawings," P. & D. Colnaghi & Co., Ltd., London, 1950, no. 1, frontispiece, illustrated.

³ Koch, C., *Die Zeichnungen Hans Baldung Grien*, Berlin, 1941, pl. 5.

⁴ Wescher, P., "Hans Baldung Grien: Four Studies of Christ on the Cross," *Old Master Drawings*, p. 70, March, 1936.



HEAD OF A SAINT, by SANDRO BOTTICELLI, ITALIAN (1444-1510)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred J. Fisher, 1950

A HEAD OF A SAINT by BOTTICELLI

The museum is happy to announce the gift by Mr. and Mrs. Alfred J. Fisher of an interesting and beautiful Florentine painting which has hung for twenty-five years in their collection, the *Head of a Saint*¹ by Sandro Botticelli (1444-1510).

The early history of the picture before about twenty-five years ago is unknown. Upon its discovery at that time in Italy it was shown to a number of the leading scholars of Italian art. Adolfo Venturi wrote of it: "A work of Botticelli, in the period in which he painted the *Pallas* in the Pitti Palace: all the

fascination of his languishing pictures is reflected in this inclined head, in the amber eyes of this youthful figure."²

Raimond van Marle, referring to the picture in his volume on the third generation of the Renaissance painters in Florence, said: "In connection with Botticelli's *Primavera* I should like to mention a painting of the head of a saint, perhaps a fragment, in the collection of Mr. A. Fisher in Detroit. It certainly shows a marked resemblance to the female figures of the picture in the Uffizi [that is, the *Primavera*]."³ It is unusual in fifteenth century painting to find the head of a saint represented in this form. But the picture is definitely not a fragment of a larger composition, as Van Marle suggested. Examination of the panel shows that it was always in this form. The narrow fifteenth century frame originally attached to the panel has been removed and a modern frame put in its place. But the marks of the old frame are clearly visible around the four sides of the panel and around the edges of the picture itself the gesso rises in the characteristic ridge that indicates the junction with the frame.

Georg Gronau noted this in his expertise: "The picture," he wrote, "reproduced on the reverse [of this photograph] I consider a hitherto unknown work of the Florentine painter Sandro Botticelli. I have never come upon another ideal representation of a woman which exhibits this form of the bust portrait; therefore it should be expressly emphasized that it is not by any chance a fragment, but that the picture seems to me as the artist intended it and therefore really indicates a unique case."⁴

Berenson, on the contrary, does not accept this attribution but has no name to offer.⁵

This picture belongs, therefore, as Adolfo Venturi notes, to that raffiné and introspective mood of Florentine painting in the 1480's, a sweet-sad mood of poetic dreaming which preceded and perhaps foreshadowed the violent reaction led by Savonarola. It is a mood familiar to us from a series of masterworks by Botticelli, and from those of his pupil and friend Filippino Lippi. More mechanically treated, it became the stock in trade of such artists as Lorenzo di Credi and Raffaellino del Garbo. But it permeated Florentine art and is to be found even in the Madonnas of the vigorous Verrocchio and in the work of his great pupil Leonardo.

E. P. RICHARDSON

¹ Cat. no. 1021. Panel. Height 16 inches; width 11 inches. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred J. Fisher, 1950. Acc. no. 50.243.

² Roma, July 1, 1926, "Opera del Botticelli, nel periodo in cui dispinse la Pallade di palazzo Pitti—tutto il fascino delle sue immagini languenti si riflette nella testa chine, negli occhi d'ambra di questa giovanile figura. A. Venturi."

³ R. van Marle, *The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting*, 1931, XII, p. 87.

⁴ "Umstehend wiedergegebenes Bild halte ich für ein bisher unbekanntes Werk des Florentiner Malers Sandro Botticelli. Es ist mir bisher kein zweites weibliches Idealbildnis begegnet, das diese Form des Brustbildes zeigt; daher sei ausdrücklich betont, dass es nicht etwa ein Ausschnitt ist, sondern dass das Bild so wie wir es sehen von dem Maler angelegt wurde und daher wahrscheinlich ein Unikum bedeutet. Gronau, London I. X. 1926."

⁵ Letter to the writer, February, 1951.

TWO ITALIAN RENAISSANCE VELVETS

Two Italian velvets were recently hung in the Textile Gallery. One, a rich emerald green voided satin velvet with a pomegranate pattern, was the gift of the Founders Society and Mrs. John S. Newberry;¹ the second, a deep red pile-on-pile velvet with a rose and crown pattern, was the gift of Mr. John Lord Booth.²

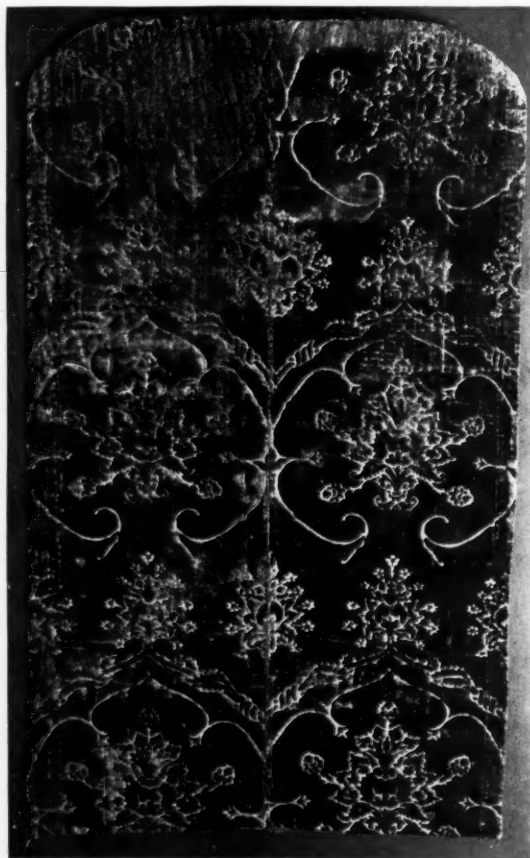
The pomegranate and leaf pattern of the green velvet was developed from Oriental textiles known and sought in Italy even before Roger II established looms in Sicily early in the twelfth century. The development of this particular pattern seems to have centered in Venice, where designers of the late fourteenth and fifteenth century, inspired by the example of rich Persian silks, designed bolder, simpler variations, retaining all the while the silhouette of the large polylobed leaf defined by short reversed curves. In this example, the solid velvet background is given more prominence through its simple treatment than in its Oriental prototypes. The fine linear pattern of the ground weave showing between areas of pile has some of the quality of wrought iron. Because of this similarity, this pattern is often termed *ferronnerie*.

In this textile, as in many others of the type, there appears a secondary decorative theme in the flowering branches which pass around the leaves. On the costume of the Archangel Raphael in an altarpiece by Neri di Bicci, in the Museum collection³, a pattern very much like this is woven in red velvet on a ground of cloth of gold. In that textile the flowering branches form hexagonal compartments around each leaf, while in our velvet a branch runs horizontally between each row of leaves. From the center of each branch, and between each of these, grows a pomegranate surrounded by pointed leaves, rosettes and carnations. This device, enriched with additional leaves and five radiating carnations, decorates the center of each five-lobed leaf. The carnation, as well as the tulip and hyacinth, were flowers introduced into Italy from Persia and immediately adapted for textile design by Italian weavers.

The velvet is in two widths, seamed down the middle. The rounded corners of one end prove that it was once part of a chasuble. Such velvets were made in fifteenth century Italy.

The pattern of the red pile-on-pile velvet, while based on the same device of a five-lobed leaf with a center decoration, has been developed toward a bolder, more schematic form. The emphasis is now placed on the central rosette and the crown from which each leaf springs on a twisted, bifurcating stem. The rosette, often incorrectly referred to as a Tudor rose, which does appear in Italian textiles woven at this time, differs from the English motif in general configuration as well as in having six rather than five petals and is simply a variation of the rosettes found in Persian silks. The use of a crown as an ornament in silks of this type can be traced to the middle of the fifteenth century but seems to have been used more often in examples from the sixteenth or seventeenth century.⁴ Because of the developed ornamental forms in this velvet, it has been ascribed to the middle of the sixteenth century.

This type of velvet was often woven in bands about 12 inches wide. In our piece, two widths have been seamed down the middle and edged with gold galloon. In its original form, however, the textile, with a single width exposed, was worn predominantly as a stole by the Venetian Procurators of Saint Mark. Such sixteenth century painters as Titian and Tintoretto have given us portraits

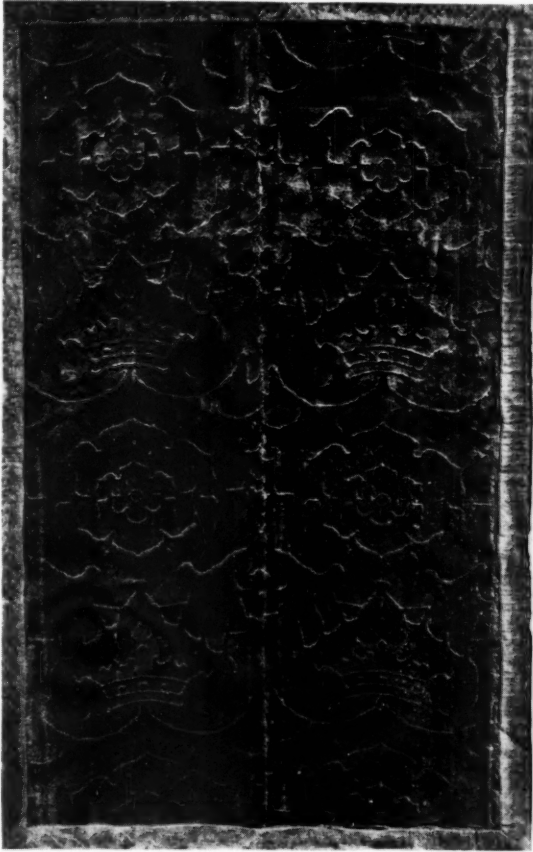


GREEN VOIDED SATIN VELVET, ITALIAN (Venice), Fifteenth Century
Gift of the Founders Society and Mrs. John S. Newberry, 1950

of nobles wearing similar velvets as garments and Procurators wearing the stole over the left shoulder.⁵

The office of the Procurator of Saint Mark, next to that of the Doge, was the highest electoral position in the government of Venice. It had been established in the eleventh century to provide an officer to protect and administrate the treasury of Saint Mark's Cathedral. Later, the Procurators were authorized to execute the wills of patricians, to act as guardians for the orphaned children of nobles, and to handle the affairs of patrician widows. The element of protec-

tion and surveillance implicit in the duties of the first Procurators was retained even though later officers were accorded these broader functions. At the time our velvet was worn, certain Procurators, in charge of a special guard recruited from the workers of the arsenal, stood sentry duty during the meetings of the Great Council. A contemporary engraving shows three Procurators fulfilling this



RED VOIDED VELVET, ITALIAN (Venice), MID-SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Gift of John Lord Booth, 1949

duty at the entrance to Sansovino's charming Loggetta built at the base of the great Campanile.⁶ We may be justified in finding here the origin of the tradition which maintains that the velvet stoles were worn as a protection against the dagger thrusts of assassins. But since Venetian ambassadors also wore stoles, made of cloth of gold lined with ermine, the accessory may have been worn simply as an emblem of rank or profession. Although it would seem that the badge of so honored a position would have been greatly coveted by its owner and particularly by his family, no mention of the stole is made in the testament of

Marc-Antonio Barbaro (Procurator from 1571 to 1595) although he directs his beneficiaries to keep at their discretion any clothing and silver and to sell the rest.⁷

Paintings in which velvets of this type may be seen have been mentioned above. Textiles similar to our *ferronnerie* velvet are represented as costumes, hangings and floor coverings in paintings by such Quattrocento masters as Melozzo da Forlì, Carlo Crivelli and Pinturicchio. Both velvets are worthy representatives of a great period in which great painters contributed designs to the art of weaving and in turn borrowed them from weavers to enrich their own compositions.

A. S. CAVALLO

¹ Acc. no. 50.137. Length 37 inches; width 21½ inches. Gift of the Founders Society and Mrs. John S. Newberry, 1950.

² Acc. no. 49.457. Length 37½ inches; width 23 inches. Gift of John Lord Booth, 1949.

³ Acc. no. 26.114. *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*, VIII, 13 and XIII, 42.

⁴ Alan S. Cole, *Ornament in European Silks*, London, 1899, p. 86.

⁵ Titian's *Pesaro Madonna* (figure kneeling at the right) in the Church of the Frari, Venice, and Tintoretto's *Portrait of a Procurator* in the Academy, Venice, are examples.

⁶ A reproduction of this engraving by Giacomo Franco, dated 1570, is given in Yriarte's *La Vie d'un Patricien de Venise au XVIe Siècle*, Paris, p. 52.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 365.

JAN HACKAERT'S LANDSCAPE WITH A STAG HUNT

The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam as it was arranged before the war offered an incomparable survey of Dutch art and culture. One thing an American observer could learn from it was that Dutch painting is a far wider and richer world of imaginative experience than it appears in America. Many fine artists, even whole schools of artists, exist within it who are either entirely unrepresented in our museums or represented so fragmentarily that they make no clear impression. The so-called Italianate landscape painters, for example — the painters who studied in Italy in contrast to the well known group of native landscapists — formed in the Rijksmuseum a large section, of a distinctive character and attractive poetry, composed of artists almost totally unknown to us here. One landscape of *Lake Trasimene* by Jan Hackaert, in particular, lingers in my mind as one of the most beautiful of the Dutch landscapes shown in that vast collection. Hackaert and other artists of this school, Jan Both, Jan Asselyn, Nicolas Berchem, Adam Pynacker, Karel DuJardin, and many others were highly appreciated in the great period of English collecting from 1750 to 1850, when most of the great English private collections were formed, a period which must be considered, historically, as one of exceptional taste and discernment. England thus has many fine examples of these artists today, as does Germany alone. But in America we hardly know of their existence.

We are happy to acquire, therefore, a fine example of Jan Hackaert (Amsterdam, c. 1629-1699), a *Forest Landscape with a Stag Hunt*, as the gift of Mrs.



LANDSCAPE WITH A STAG HUNT by JAN HACKAERT, DUTCH (ca. 1629-1699)
Gift of Mrs. Margaret Haass Strasburg in memory of her father, Walter F. Haass, 1950

Margaret Haass Strasburg in memory of her father, Walter F. Haass.¹ There is to my knowledge no other work of this artist in America (a picture in the New-York Historical Society, no. 8348, is incorrectly attributed to him). This is a picture most characteristic of his art which found its best materials in such hunting scenes and wood interiors, in level beams of golden light sifting through foliage, and especially in the fine calm, melancholy of the evening or the first hours of the morning. The distinguishing mark of the Italianate painters is the warmth of their light, in contrast to the cool light of Hobbema or Ruisdael. Hackaert's light is a delicate gold, which mingles with the deep greens, silvers and warm browns of the wood interior to form a characteristic artistic effect.

Two good observers, seeing this canvas at a distance in my office, exclaimed questioningly, "Courbet? Daubigny?" The resemblance to a nineteenth century landscape is in many respects striking, both in color and in use of light. But a painter like Courbet or Daubigny painted with a wide brush, heavily loaded with paint, whose stroke leaves a broad, soft, blurred tone. A Dutch painter like Hackaert painted with a smaller brush and a more precise stroke and, as a result, even in the broadest masses of foliage, never lost his sense of line. The trees make a delicate filigree of line at the edges, melting inside into a dark mass of foliage, so that the whole soft interplay of tones is penetrated and controlled by line. This can be seen very clearly in a fine wash drawing, *The Edge of the Woods*, by Hackaert which John S. Newberry, Jr., inspired by Mrs. Strasburg's fine gift, generously gave us from his own collection of drawings.² No nineteenth century painter, building up this shifting pattern of lights and shadows in these masses of foliage, would have been interested to keep also the studied control of outline, which gives Hackaert's drawing such clarity and elegance of form. The difference is almost like that which one observes in music between the baroque, which never lost its elegance of line, and the broad massing of tone of the nineteenth century.

Walter F. Haass, in whose memory this *Forest Landscape with a Stag Hunt* was given, was a great lover of Dutch painting and a great lover of hunting. It gives us much pleasure to see our museum enriched by a picture so congenial to his tastes and so interesting an addition to our collection.

E. P. RICHARDSON

¹ Cat. no. 1015. Canvas. Height 34½ inches; width 26½ inches. Signed. Collections: Earl of Moray, Edinburg. References: Centennial Exhibition, Edinburg, 1900; Hofstede de Groot, vol. IX, no. 28. Given in memory of Walter F. Haass by his daughter Mrs. P. Stephen Strasburg, Jr., Washington, D.C., 1950. Acc. no. 50.198.

A VENETIAN BROCADED SATIN OF THE 18TH CENTURY

Possessed of all the richness, splendor and charm of eighteenth century Venice, this fragment of a silk wall covering is a welcome addition to the textile collection.¹ It joins the *Drummer Boy* brocade² in bringing to Detroit the enchanting, carefree quality of a Venice which was no longer a world power but which vied with Paris and Versailles as a center of fashion, culture and wit.

Venice was then a city of publishers, bookshops, literary cafés, encyclopedics, and decaying but high-living native and foreign *haut monde*.³ But it was still primarily a city wedded to the sea; and the love of sea and ships inspired some designer to produce this handsome textile. The plain compound satin ground is brown. Over this, brocaded oval cartouches, three to each repeat unit, with borders of shells, coral and sea moss, introduce a riot of color: red and silver palm branches, piers and pavements, brilliant yellow and green foliage and sea moss, pink and blue skies, green coral, and yellow and mauve shells.

The painted and lacquered commodes, armoires, desks and screens made in Venice and used in rooms hung with silks of this type show the same influence

of that most popular style of the time, *chinoiserie*. Centering the elements on little islands decorated with rococo palms and other foliage was a method used by decorators in every medium, even by the great Tiepolo in his charming murals for the Stanza Cinese at the Villa Valmarana. Miniature city views, genre subjects, satirical scenes and masks framed with motifs borrowed from cabinet-makers' mouldings, were used for decorating calling cards, invitations, books, and fans as well as furniture and textiles.

It was probably one of these designers of vignettes, a Volpato, Cunego or Verico, rather than a Tiepolo or Canaletto, who designed our silk. The easy handling of fine detail and the convincing illusion of space beyond the architectural frames are the work of a designer familiar with the problems of drawing



BROCADED SATIN, ITALIAN (Venice), EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
Gift of the Octavia Bates Fund, 1950

on a small scale. His ships, delightful little pleasure craft with sails furled, are conventional accessories, part of his repertoire. But for the shells, he combed the shores of neighboring islands or visited one of the ubiquitous collections of marine objects.⁴ It is apparent that he loved these shells. We can distinguish ten different varieties, excluding the coral. With the exception of the two types of scallop shells and the giant clam shell which are more or less conventionalized and typical of motifs used by cabinetmakers, he must have drawn the other shells, the univalves, from nature. Here the interests of the designer and weaver clash. The weaver, preferring for his craft a symmetrical design, has given us a handsome pattern in which the left half of the textile is the mirror image of the right. In so doing, he has caused the opening of each shell to appear on the left or right of its center, depending on its position in the pattern. Yet both weaver and designer, whether or not concerned by this slight deviation from biological truth, combined their efforts to create a design which is both pictorial and abstract, realistic and fantastic. It is a style which depends on and yet transcends the current mode. It is *chinoiserie* which has become in Venice *marinerie*.

A. S. CAVALLLO

¹ Acc. no. 50.185. Length 33½ inches; width 21½ inches. Gift of the Octavia Bates Fund, 1950. The specimen in the Musée Historique des Tissus at Lyon is published by Henri d'Hennezel in his book *Le Décor des Soieries d'art anciennes et modernes* (plate 40) as a French textile of the 18th century.

² *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*, Vol. XXII, No. 2, p. 16. Illustrated on cover.

³ See Philippe Monnier, *Venise au XVIIIe Siècle*, Perrin and Co., Paris, 1908, for a full account of life and art in eighteenth century Venice.

⁴ Collections of shells, marine plants and fossils were to be found in most European capitals during the eighteenth century. The most famous collection in Venice was that of the apothecary Zannichelli, the catalog having been published by his son in 1736. See Antoine Joseph Dezallier d'Argenville, *L'Histoire naturelle éclaircie dans deux de ses parties principales, la lithologie et la conchyliologie*, Paris, 1742.

A CONVERSATION PIECE by PHILIPPE MERCIER

The history of painting in England in the first half of the eighteenth century is a delightful field of research. With the notable exception of Hogarth, there are no great masters, it is true — Reynolds was born in 1723, Gainsborough and Wilson a few years later. But, in London and the provinces, there were a host of minor artists whose works are characterized by unaffected charm, a certain naiveté and spontaneity of execution, and even more by a feeling for the joys of everyday life in eighteenth century England. Many of these painters were foreigners, Frenchmen like Gravelot, Gainsborough's teacher, Italians like Amigoni, Germans or Dutchmen like Marcellus Laroon. Yet their works are often indistinguishable from those of a Highmore or a Davis; they have the same pleasing qualities and the same limitations, among which perhaps lack of imagination and monotony are conspicuous. These painters have recently been rediscovered, in England through the writings of Ralph Edwards and Sacheverell Sitwell, in



PLAYING SOLDIER by PHILIPPE MERCIER, FRENCH (1689-1760)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb, 1950

this country in part through the influence of the exhibition of "Conversation Pieces" held at the Institute three years ago. Today most of them enjoy a greater vogue than they knew when alive. With one exception however: Philippe Mercier, who is one of the more interesting artists of the group, is still quite neglected (are there any of his works in American museums? I doubt it). Yet, judging from the large group portrait of three children and a dog recently presented by Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb, he may deserve a rather better fate, and Dr. Paul Wescher will publish in a forthcoming issue of the *Art Quarterly* a number of Mercier's paintings which we believe will give him a better reputation.

Philippe Mercier was born in Berlin of French parents, Huguenot refugees who left France after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. He studied in Berlin under Antoine Pesne, an academic painter of limited ability who gave him a thorough ground in technique. In England, where he probably arrived about 1711, he became "Principal Painter and librarian" to Prince Frederick, the Prince of Wales, whose protection he enjoyed for several years. Later he retired to Yorkshire, where he stayed some ten years, and where his portraits may still be found in several manors and castles. He was mentioned at different times by George Vertue, the historiographer of the English painters who (in 1736-37) spoke of Mercier as having painted "several pieces of some figures of conversation as big as the life," "conceited pleasant Fancies and habits"—a description which applies quite well to the Detroit painting.

It would be easy to find fault with certain characteristics of our painting—the lack of concentration of the action, the slightness of the drama, for example. Yet the Institute would be poorer without it. There was something quite appealing, a delightful freshness in the subject, which Mercier has caught without difficulty. Those clean polished faces of healthy Yorkshire children, so obviously brothers and sisters, are free from affectation—the very antithesis of the posed portraits dear to more ingenious painters. More important still, the composition, with the dark red mass of the elder boy in the foreground giving solidity to the scene, is unusual, and reminds one of those Japanese prints in which plans are strongly delimited. Mercier is often mentioned as a disciple of Watteau, some of whose designs he engraved. Here he is far closer to Chardin and a sense of largeness, of monumentality almost, perhaps caused by these figures which fill almost completely the canvas, is evident.

The painting has been engraved by John Faber, one of the good mezzotint engravers of the period. The engraving, however, is not remarkable, except for the long poem which, as usual, accompanies the print. It is probably the worst English poem of the century, and therefore should deserve to be quoted in full. But perhaps these lines will be sufficient:

Just Emblem of the genuine British Fire!
See here the gen'rous Boy warm with desire
Of Arms, and Glory, mimics the Command
Of Chiefs and Heroes with expressive hand
Teaching his dog (for Tray is all his host) . . .

Let us stop here. Fortunately the painting is better, much better than the poem.

PAUL L. GRIGAUT

Cat. no. 1027. Height 50 inches; width 39½ inches. Signed upper left. Engraved (in 1744) by John Faber. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb, 1950. Acc. no. 50.253.



THE CHINESE EMPEROR, GERMAN (HÖCHST), ca. 1770
Gift of James S. Holden in memory of his mother, Mrs. E. G. Holden, 1951

"CHINOISERIE"

It is only within the last few years that the Institute has attempted to build a representative collection of European porcelain. Today, thanks in great part to a few enthusiastic collectors such as Mrs. Haass and Mr. Tannahill, we own an impressive group of continental and English porcelain. Carefully selected and homogeneous, this group gives an excellent idea of this most delicate of the minor arts, from the early Meissen products with their Watteau designs to the Regency ink-well presented by Mr. Kyes, perhaps the most splendid example of Swansea porcelain in this country.

The Institute's latest acquisition in this field is also one of the most im-

portant. It is no less than the masterpiece of the short-lived Höchst factory, a group known as "The Chinese Emperor," which has been attributed by good authorities to the modeller J. P. Melchior.¹ Presented to the Institute by James S. Holden, in memory of his mother, Mrs. E. G. Holden, who was an original incorporator of the Museum, it will take its place among the most famous examples of German porcelain in this country. Superlatives come easily in this case. In delicacy of modeling and harmony of colouring, in the subtle perfection of its Rococo asymmetry, it is the epitome of all the qualities that have made German porcelain famous.

In all probability our group was the center piece of one of the complex table decorations which in the eighteenth century replaced the *Schauessen*, those figures of wax or sugar used in earlier and more prosaic times in the banquets of the German nobility. And indeed, with the pastel shades of their gay colors, the charmingly stilted attitudes of their puppet-like characters, in the icy coldness of their glazes, many porcelain groups remind one (and I say this with great respect) of the wonderful fantasies of the French *pâtissiers* of Versailles or Sans-Souci. There the resemblance ends. The permanency of the paste and glaze, the feeling for light effects, the tenseness of the attitudes, are qualities which only porcelain figures possess.

Like so many *Chinoiseries* "The Chinese Emperor" was probably inspired by a print after Watteau; but it is nearer still to Boucher, the master of the Rococo and the exotic. No better models could have been used. There never was anything *outré* in the contrapposto of the French masters, or anything trite in the flowing lines of their draperies. To speak of restraint in describing the Höchst group may seem strange; yet restraint there is. The volutes which are the walls of this *Chinesenhaus* are only lightly outlined with gold, the lace of the roof is strengthened by a solid white and purple border. More subtle still is the composition. The concentration of ornament in the center of the group and the exquisite sense of balance, as well as the placing of the characters, are the mark of a great decorator, and "The Chinese Emperor" is closer in fact to Boucher's cartoons for his immense tapestries than to his, or Watteau's, engravings.

There exist several examples of "The Chinese Emperor." One is in the Metropolitan Museum, lent by Mr. Wilson.² Another, illustrated in Hannover's *Pottery and Porcelain*,³ was in the Hamburg Museum. The group in Detroit is different from the New York and Hamburg examples — not in its modelling, of course, since the same molds were used, but in its color scheme, which is simpler, perhaps more effective. The characteristic color of the Höchst factory, a rich purple lilac, is here sparsely applied, in the drapery flowing around the Emperor and the costume of the poet crowned with laurels who advances toward his benefactor. But the most important difference is in the decoration of the steps which lead to the throne, quite plain in our example, marbled in the others. Other differences exist in the costumes of the main characters. Perhaps it is human to believe that our group is the most striking.

PAUL L. GRICAUT

¹ Acc. no. 51.59. Height 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Mark: purple wheel with six spokes in underglaze. Formerly collection Robert von Hirsch. The similarity between Watteau's *Chinese Emperor*, engraved by Huquier (Dacier and Vuaflart, no. 135), is slight. A German copy of the engraving exists, which may have been used by the Höchst modeller. Gift of James S. Holden, in memory of his mother, Mrs. E. G. Holden, 1951.

² Cf. *European Porcelain*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1949, No. 204.

³ Vol. III, Fig. 262. There the group is attributed to Melchior, and dated "about 1770."

PORTRAIT OF COMMODORE OLIVER HAZARD PERRY by JOHN WESLEY JARVIS

In the days when the Great Lakes waterway was the one essential highway of the northwest, Oliver Hazard Perry, in a singularly gallant naval action, won control of the waterway for the United States and determined that Detroit should be an American city. On either side of the main entrance of the City Hall are two cannon, relics of the Battle of Lake Erie, which were the only souvenirs of Perry's victory in the city until Mr. Dexter M. Ferry, Jr., presented to us recently a fine *Portrait of Oliver Hazard Perry* by John Wesley Jarvis for our collection of the arts of early Detroit.¹ (See cover.)

In few naval actions, according to Admiral Mahan, has the personality of the commander counted for so much as in the Battle of Lake Erie. The same might be said of the whole campaign. Perry was ordered to Lake Erie on February 17, 1813. Traveling across New England and New York state chiefly by sleigh, he reached Erie on March 27. There he found Noah Brown, a skilled New York shipbuilder, and Sailing Master Dobbins awaiting the arrival of fifty carpenters from Philadelphia, who were more than five weeks in making the wintry journey. There was at this time no American naval force on the lake. The control of the upper lakes was held by a British fleet commanded by Commander Robert Heriot Barclay, a veteran of Trafalgar. So long as this fleet dominated Lake Erie, General Harrison's army could advance no further toward Detroit than Seneca-town, thirty miles south of Sandusky. The keels of two 20-ton brigs and three gun boats had been laid before Perry's arrival; but timber to complete the ships had still to be cut from the virgin forest and all the materials to complete them found in country that was still a wilderness. When the fleet was built, sailors had still to be found. The task of creating a force of ten vessels, and training a force of five hundred landsmen and sailors (many of whom had never seen salt water) to work and fight the ships, can hardly be imagined.

In August 1813, Perry's ships were ready for operations. By heroic efforts he got them across the bar at Presque Isle during a brief absence of the blockading British squadron and sailed up the lake to make contact with Harrison's army. He set up headquarters at Put-in-Bay. When Harrison came to visit the fleet, he observed that Perry's ships were undermanned, and after his return to the army, called for volunteers. Perry's fleet thus acquired nearly a hundred Kentucky riflemen in fringed shirts and leggings, not one of whom had ever been on

a ship of any kind; but their marksmanship and fighting spirit made them some of his most valuable men.

Barclay's fleet sailed out from Amherstburg to meet Perry on September 10, 1813. The naval action that day resulted in the defeat and capture of an entire British fleet, an event without precedent. A victory so decisive, Perry's gallantry in transferring from the sinking *Lawrence* to the *Niagara* during the action, his laconic dispatch announcing his victory to General Harrison, beginning, "We have met the enemy and they are ours," made of him a national hero. After the victory, Perry cooperated with Harrison in the rest of the campaign, helping to take possession of Detroit, transporting troops across the lake to the mouth of the Thomas, and fighting at the Battle of the Thames as aide-de-camp to the commander-in-chief. His victory, it can be said, led progressively to the recapture of Detroit, the end of the great Indian confederacy led by Tecumseh, and the overthrow of British power west of Niagara. The American negotiators at Ghent were able to make good their claims to the Old Northwest and Detroit came at last firmly within the territory of the United States.

As a reward for his part in the campaign, Congress voted to Perry its thanks, a medal and the rank of Captain. The cities of Boston and Newport gave him a service of plate. New York gave him an official reception and commissioned John Wesley Jarvis to paint his portrait, with those of other military and naval heroes, to decorate its city hall. This picture, Jarvis' most ambitious work, represents Perry in a small boat in the act of transferring his flag from the *Lawrence* to the *Niagara*. Jarvis also made a number of bust portraits, one of which is now in the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, a second in private possession in New York City. The third portrait, which has now come to Detroit, was unknown to Harold E. Dickson when he published his excellent biography of Jarvis in 1949. So far as our information goes, the portrait is said to have come from the Rodgers family of Washington, D. C. Captain John Rodgers (1771-1838) was Perry's commanding officer in Tripoli and a lifelong friend. A family document headed *List of Distribution of Furniture* and dated June, 1859, which has come down with the portrait, refers to a "portrait of Uncle Oliver" which fell to the share of "John"—presumably the celebrated Admiral John Rodgers (1812-1882) of Civil War fame, afterwards superintendent of the United States Naval Observatory, during whose administration the moons of Mars were discovered by Professor Asaph Rogers.

It is curious that Detroit has not until now had a likeness of the man who played such an important part in our history. Perry is described as a man of calm unemotional nature (perhaps this came from his Quaker ancestry), considerate of his men and greatly liked and admired by them. A description of him written on the day he returned to his home at Newport after the Battle of Lake Erie, says: "He is a man of lofty stature, strongly built, with dark eyes, an irresistible smile, and an air of freshness, health, and contentment." So he appears in this portrait.

E. P. RICHARDSON

¹ Cat. no. 1006. Canvas. Height 31¼ inches; width 26 inches. The portrait was engraved by W. J. Jackman. Gift of Mr. Dexter M. Ferry, Jr., 1950. Acc. no. 50.139.

SANTOS OF THE SOUTHWEST

Along with the twentieth century rediscovery of primitive art in general came a new appreciation to Americans of the richness and variety of their own heritage of folk art, particularly that produced in the eastern half of the United States. Far less well-known is another native art form of the United States, the religious art of the Spanish colonists of the Southwest.

Yet the art of the *santero*, maker of *santos* or saintly images, is perhaps the



SAN ACACIO, AMERICAN (NEW MEXICO), EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY
Gift of Mrs. Lillian Henkel Haass, 1950

outstanding primitive art to come into existence in our country. With the exception of Indian crafts, it is our only true, indigenous art. The early Spanish colonists who produced this art lived along the northern borders of Spain's New World Empire, in what is now New Mexico, Arizona, and parts of Texas, Colorado and Utah. Two centuries ago it was a poor frontier province, endangered by Indian marauders, and isolated geographically and spiritually in the moun-

tains and desert bordering the Rio Grande. That very isolation, coupled with religious devotion and grueling poverty, called forth all the imagination and resourcefulness of the colonists. It led them to develop their own highly distinctive artistic creations, ranging from the most uncompromising realism to almost complete abstraction.

When the Spanish settlers came to the end of their long sea-voyage and overland trek, and little communities began to spring up, homes and furniture had to be built, and a living extracted from the arid soil. With all these tasks the Franciscan fathers aided and directed. Along with satisfying the physical needs of life, the *padres* had to satisfy spiritual needs as well. Ministering to an



THE HOLY FAMILY, AMERICAN (NEW MEXICO), EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY
Gift of Mrs. Lillian Henkel Haass, 1950

illiterate flock, far from the aid and influence of Rome, and with none of the rich materials available in Baroque Spain and Mexico, they had to secure in some way recognizable images of their communities' patron saints and holy persons, which could serve as symbols of the Catholic faith. To Spanish colonist and Indian convert alike, religion was the main solace in life, the local church the focus of their spiritual and intellectual lives.

In the early years, the *santos* needed in every adobe church and home were made by some of the Franciscans themselves, next by local craftsmen under their direction. Soon some of the more skillful *santeros*, like the itinerant painters of New England, began to travel from village to village, making for the local worshipers a *retablo*, a flat painting for an altar, or a *bulto*, a figure in the round, for a niche. These *retablos* and *bultos* served a far greater purpose than mere decoration of church and home. Through them, the devout, often superstitious peasant could express his own deep spiritual emotion. His faith in God was as simple and stark as the condition of his life, and religion the only hope for a better future.



CRISTO, AMERICAN (NEW MEXICO), EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY
Gift of Robert H. Tannahill, 1950

The *santos* were the result of their environment in form as well as content. Native cottonwood, soft and easily carved, was used for the *bultos*, pinewood for the *retablos*. Both were covered with a thin coating of gesso made from locally found and prepared gypsum. Pigments, with a few exceptions, were made of local minerals, compounded into tempera paint.

For the *santero*, the making of the image was itself an act of worship; since

it was the devout expression of something far more important than himself, he did not identify himself with it in any way. These *santos*, made by many anonymous hands, are therefore difficult to date. The practice of copying earlier prototypes, the loss of small attributes, and poorly understood mending and restoration all help confuse the problem.

A group of four *santos* recently acquired by the Detroit Institute of Arts gives an excellent idea of this art of the Southwest. Fortunately for the Museum, several were secured in Santa Fe some years ago, for a growing awareness of their aesthetic power has reduced the number available today to a small fraction of what it formerly was. Appearing among the *santos* are some of the lesser known personages in Christian art, such as Acatius, Alexis and Longinus. Perhaps the most popular of these was San Acacio,¹ whose figure has been newly acquired.

The saint, according to legend, was the leader of ten thousand soldiers who suffered martyrdom on Mount Arat. Mr. Mitchell Wilder tells us how the ten thousand martyrs were given at death the power of bestowing health and earthly goods upon all who would cherish their memory. He adds,² "For this reason, their leader, Saint Acacius, was included in the group of the Fourteen Helpers in Need, and it is in this very capacity that he might have appealed to the people of New Mexico. San Acacio's popularity is further attested to by the fact that according to an oral tradition the soldiers under the cross have been given names, a custom which perhaps originated from a saint's play." In our group, four small soldiers bearing guns stand rigidly at attention at the foot of the cross.³ San Acacio wears the uniform of the Spanish colonial army, with a bandoleer over his right shoulder. His buff coat, from which all accidental wrinkles have been smoothed, is enlivened by black buttons and touches of muted red. Spiritual rather than physical proportions are suggested by the overlarge heads and hands. The facial expression is not contorted by physical anguish but is one of stoical resignation.

A Holy Family group⁴ shows the characteristics of one of the few identifiable craftsmen. The flat, unmodelled bodies, the frame which Mary's cloak forms around her dress, and certain facial conventions such as the bold angular nose and thrusting chin, are stylistic devices associated with the maker of "flat figures." Here are all the true folk art qualities which developed during the "Great *santero* period," 1820-1830, which neither slavishly copied nor reached extreme abstraction. No narrative context, such as the *Flight Into Egypt*, obtains; the carver created a purely devotional image, with an earthly family symbolic of a heavenly one. The approach is childlike in its ingenuous simplicity; the total effect engendered by the *bulto* is one of considerable force.

Even more compelling are two renditions of Christ. One is a Head of Christ,⁵ the other a full length figure as the Man of Sorrows. This subject of Christ appearing before the faithful, displaying the wounds He suffered for them, was a symbol of penance. Our Cristo⁶ was undoubtedly made for one of the flagellant groups known as the Penitentes, who rid themselves of the burdens of sin by reenactment of the Passion at Easter. In their rites, the figure of Christ

is often moved through various position, from the erect figure of Ecce Homo to the Cross-Bearing Christ and Man of Sorrows, depending upon the clothing and position of hands. Flexible joints,⁷ fashioned out of cloth or leather, enabled the figure to hold the Cross, or as in ours, to stretch forth His unbound hands.

Some santos are brutal, even horrifying in their realism. Our *Cristo*, majestic in His sorrow, has been considerably stylized. The large truncated solids are almost geometric; the small shapes — wounds, curves of hair and eyebrow, triangle of nose and pointed beard, have all been schematized into formal abstract patterns. Heavy outlines emphasize the somber eyes and parted lips. The whole figure breathes a spirit of infinite sadness and monumental dignity. The unknown creator of our *Cristo* carved with a directness and simplicity impossible for a more sophisticated artist. His work transcends any limitations of material and technique by its highly expressive form and great intensity of feeling.

ELIZABETH H. PAYNE

¹ Acc. no. 50.142. Height 25½ inches. Gift of Mrs. Lillian Henkel Haass, 1950.

² *Santos, the Religious Folk Art of New Mexico* by Mitchell A. Wilder and Edgar Breitenbach, The Taylor Museum of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, 1943.

³ Holes bored in the base of our *San Acacio* suggest that originally the group of soldiers included six. Of the two since lost, one was in all probability a drummer.

⁴ Acc. no. 50.140. Height 23¾ inches; width 14¾ inches; depth 7¼ inches. Gift of Mrs. Lillian Henkel Haass, 1950.

⁵ Acc. no. 50.141. Height 12 inches; width 10¾ inches. Gift of Mrs. Haass, 1950.

⁶ Acc. no. 50.153. Height 25¾ inches; width 8 inches; depth 3¾ inches. Gift of Robert Tannahill, 1950.

⁷ Cloth at the elbows of our *Cristo* may have served as hinges for flexibility, but if so, they were later made rigid by mending.

THE TRAPPERS' RETURN

by GEORGES CALEB BINGHAM

Furs and the river were the origin of Detroit and for a large part of its two hundred and fifty years they supported its existence. For perhaps another century before Cadillac founded the Detroit settlement to monopolize the water route of the Great Lakes and its fur trade against the English, the *coureurs des bois* had passed through the Strait in their search for furs. These Canadian adventurers of the forest were probably the first white men to see the site where Detroit now stands. The French were the pioneers of the fur trade in North America. They began to trade with the Indians for beaver furs at Quebec. After the founding of Montreal in 1642 that outpost became the great fur market and from Lachine, above the rapids of the St. Lawrence on the island of Montreal the *coureurs des bois* set out in their canoes for the interior of the continent. And what voyages they made! Going up the Ottawa River, they passed through the region of the upper lakes to the Grand Portage where the Canadian-American frontier now touches Lake Superior. The Grand Portage was the gateway to the rivers leading to the Lake of the Woods, from which they could



THE TRAPPERS' RETURN by GEORGE CALEB BINGHAM, AMERICAN (1811-1879)
Gift of Dexter M. Ferry, Jr., 1950

pass by way of the Winnipeg River and Lake Winnipeg and the Saskatchewan River to that other enormous northward flowing chain of rivers and lakes which brought them finally to the mouth of the Mackenzie and the Arctic Ocean. From the St. Lawrence waterway they worked their way westward, establishing friendly relations with the Indians around the Great Lakes, crossed the easy portages to the Ohio and the Mississippi, and finally by way of the Missouri River found their way to the Rocky Mountains.

This class of fur traders rose from the harsh poverty of the first St. Lawrence settlements. Its leaders were often the sons of the Canadian *noblesse* who found in seventeenth century Canada no opportunity to live on their *seigniorial* grants except to work like their own peasants, for a peasant's hard living. The beaver trade offered them a profitable occupation, spiced by danger and adventure, to which the wild freedom of the woods gave an irresistible attraction. Du Lhut, La Salle, La Mothe-Cadillac, were just such men. All the efforts of the King's governors and intendants and of the priests of Quebec to keep the French colonists settled on their farms on the lower St. Lawrence could not prevent the more adventurous from taking to this wandering, wild, lawless but picturesque and heroic life.

Detroit was founded as a fur trading post although Cadillac was wise enough to give it stability by bringing permanent settlers. When the British

took possession of it in 1760, they found a half million dollars worth of furs in storage here. With the nineteenth century the fur trade gradually moved westward. The completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 opened Michigan to American settlers who cleared the land for farms. And with the coming of the railroads the historical importance of the waterways was forgotten. Only two buildings — the Mariners' Church at the foot of Woodward Avenue and one old brick warehouse — remained as landmarks of the days when the river was the dominant feature of life in Detroit; and it seems doubtful if the city cares enough for its past to preserve one of these.

A painting which has just been added to our collection, representing the life of the *coureurs des bois*, of an artistic value equal to its documentary interest, is therefore a most significant acquisition. One of the outstanding American painters, George Caleb Bingham, grew up on the frontier in Missouri in time to see the life of the fur trappers in its last brilliant chapter. In his time the best trapping grounds for beaver were in the streams of the Rocky Mountains. He saw the trappers on their way up and down the Missouri River to the fur market at St. Louis. Many Americans were now mingled with the French and the half-breed *coureurs des bois*, but the life of the fur traders and their character remained the same. The Canadian trappers Rouleau and Saraphin whom Parkman described in *The Oregon Trail* sounded very like their eighteenth century counterparts at Detroit: "Saraphin was a tall powerful fellow with a sullen and sinister countenance. His rifle had very probably drawn other blood than that of buffalo or Indians. Rouleau had a broad, ruddy face, marked with as few traces of thought or care as a child's. His figure was square and strong, but the first joints of both his feet were frozen off, and his horse had lately thrown and trampled upon him, by which he had been severely injured in the chest. But nothing could subdue his gaiety. He went all day rolling about the camp on his stumps of feet, talking, singing, and frolicking with the Indian women. Rouleau had an unlucky partiality for squaws. He always had one, whom he must needs bedizen with beads, ribbons, and all the finery of an Indian wardrobe; and though he was obliged to leave her behind during his expeditions, this hazardous necessity did not at all trouble him, for his disposition was the reverse of jealous."

A pair of "Fur Traders Descending the Missouri" in their dugout canoe loaded with furs is the subject of one of Bingham's earliest paintings, executed before 1844. Since this picture passed into the possession of the Metropolitan Museum of Art some years ago it has become one of the celebrated American paintings. As so often happens in the case of Bingham's subjects, he painted the same theme more than once. His second, somewhat different composition, *The Trapper's Return*, was sold by him to the American Art Union in 1851, which sold it at auction in 1852. Thereafter the picture was lost sight of for nearly a hundred years until it was acquired this year from a private collector in Pittsburgh by The Old Print Shop and passed, as the generous gift of Mr. Dexter M. Ferry, Jr., into our collection. No more interesting nor more precious illustration of the adventurous life from which our city sprang could be imagined.

In *The Trappers' Return* Bingham was not only recording a remarkable aspect of life—he was also a remarkable artist. Largely self taught, he had nevertheless the perceptions and a sense of style of a fine painter. At a time when most landscapists were overinfluenced by the art of engraving and landscape paintings tended to be small in touch and rather meagre in color, Bingham's style was monumental in its simplicity of composition, large and easy in drawing, bold and assured in color. His rendering of the calm and slightly hazy atmosphere of a still morning shows an eye exceptionally sensitive to light and color. It is a picture that delights and refreshes the eye by its bold, clear, sensitive cords of color, its radiance of tone, its happy power.

The older trapper is puffing a clay pipe as he paddles slowly down the stream. He wears a red shirt and a blue cloth cap. His fierce eyes and furrowed face mark him as an example of the Saraphin type, made sullen by solitude. His younger companion, who lies at ease on the painted buffalo skin thrown over their packets of furs, has the open, laughing face of a Rouleau, but the instinctive ease with which his rifle is held ready illustrates the danger of their life. A black bear cub, tied to the prow of the dugout, stands uneasily, as if it was by no means accustomed yet to a life of captivity. The American soldiers of the twentieth century who pick up all kinds of strange pets the world over had predecessors.

The painting is signed on the canoe *G. C. Bingham 1851*, the same year in which it appeared in the American Art Union catalogue as no. 173. The dimensions given for that entry and the description leave no question that this was our picture. Drawings for the two figures are in the Bingham sketchbook owned by the Mercantile Library, St. Louis, Missouri.

E. P. RICHARDSON

¹ Cat. no. 1005. Canvas. Height 26¼ inches; width 36¼ inches. Signed on the canoe: *G. C. Bingham 1851*. References: *American Art Union Catalogue*, 1851, no 173 (*"Trapper's Return (36 x 26)"*—the figures are descending the river in a dug-out, at the bows of which is a bear chained"); Fern Helen Rusk, *George Caleb Bingham, the Missouri Artist*, 1917, p. 51; Albert Christ-Janer, *George Caleb Bingham of Missouri*, 1940, p. 55. Gift of Dexter M. Ferry, Jr., 1950. Acc. no. 50.138.

JOHN TUNNARD'S WASTELAND

The abstractions of John Tunnard are exciting, enigmatic, and beautifully realized. Precision of form and surface, restrained and often impersonal color combine with the drama of unexplored space and the mystery of compelling, totemic forms. In *The Wasteland*,¹ recently acquired through the generous gift of John S. Newberry, Jr., a delicately textured abstraction of spatial movement sweeps around two spare and anonymous forms in barren surroundings where even the vegetation has been stripped bare of its identity.

Originally a painter of representational landscapes, Tunnard gradually became interested in what he termed "the geometrically dramatic content"² of what he was painting. "The dramatic movements of roads, of ruts sweeping into farmyards, of the lines of telegraph poles or the sweep of railings"³ crowded other

aspects of the landscape from his pictures. Finally he ceased to paint from actual landscapes at all, finding it more exciting to "invent"⁴ form according to intuitive suggestions. But in spite of his renunciation of representational painting, Tunnard's invention is inevitably conditioned by his familiarity with nature. In Cornwall, where he has lived and painted since 1930, he has enriched his knowledge of the countryside through his customary pastimes — bird watching, bug hunting, and field botany. From this fund of experience emerge the topographical contours, the willowy tree forms, the rock patterns, the lichen-like textures, and the frosty colors of *The Wasteland*.

Although many of Tunnard's paintings are dominated by technomorphic abstractions said to originate in the electronic devices (radar installations, meteorology towers, power-lines, etc) which criss-cross the strategic Cornwall coast, *The Wasteland* is predominantly natural in character. Only one form — the little one at the left — has the impersonal machine finish, the mathematically regular design which has earned Tunnard the title of "the technological eye."⁵

This form and its companion in the central area of the picture are in their skeletal proportions generally appropriate to the suggestion of the title *The Wasteland* but, as the product of intuitive and automatic invention, they are not to be identified as specifically descriptive. They are at once descriptive and totemic, familiar and strange. A disquieting ambivalence also characterizes the picture's color. The garnet stain of the central oval, emerging from an over-all harmony of descriptive greys whites, blues, and browns, is both obtrusive and mysterious.

Fortunately we need not wait on understanding to enjoy the imagery of Tunnard's painting. It is as delicately achieved as any *trompe-l'œil* realism. The common earmark of modern painting — the personal brushstroke — is nowhere



WASTELAND by JOHN TUNNARD, ENGLISH CONTEMPORARY
Gift of John S. Newberry, Jr., 1950

in evidence; no frenzied strokes, no accidental splashing, no brutal scoring disturb the serenity of the picture surface. A precisely disciplined, yet sensitive and subtle realization of complex patterns and textures results in an exquisite surface rarely sought in surrealist abstraction. Tunnard, acknowledging the subconscious as a superior reality, renders this uncharted region with the clarity and tender precision of a Flemish primitive for a unicorn.

VIRGINIA HARRIMAN

¹ Cat. no. 1026. Height 11½ inches; width 23¼ inches. Gift of John S. Newberry, Jr., 1950. Acc. no. 50.251.

² R. Myerscough Walker, "Modern Art Explained by Modern Artists—An Interview with John Tunnard," *The Artist*, April, 1944, p. 41.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

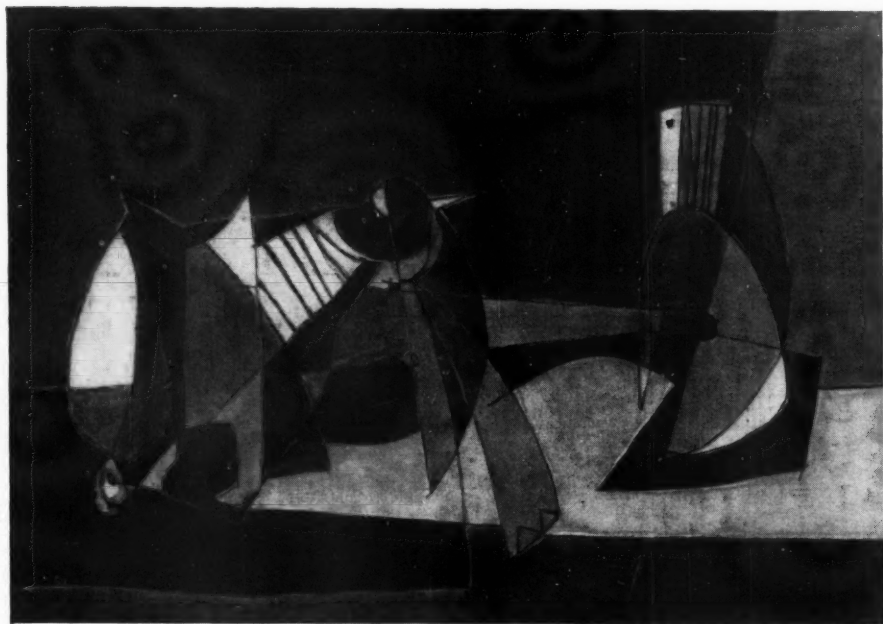
⁵ Cf. John Anthony Thwaites, "The Technological Eye," *Art Quarterly*, vol. IX, 1946, pp. 115-127.

DISPETTO, A PAINTING by AFRO

The Basaldella family is one whose contributions to the arts in modern Italy must be reckoned in terms of generations; two of the present generation, Afro and Mirko, are becoming increasingly well-known in this country. Although Mirko is also a painter, he is perhaps best known to us as a sculptor. The younger of the two, the painter Afro, is now represented in the Museum's expanding collection of modern art by a handsome painting recently given by John S. Newberry, Jr.

Dispetto, the title of Afro's painting, can be variously translated as "spite," "scorn," "disrespect" or "ill-temper," and any one of these terms might be applied in a general way to this organization of disparate shapes. The attitudes which these terms suggest are visually represented in the impingement of one shape upon another, by the sharp edges and prongs which intercept the total form at various points. A strong sense of movement, though certainly present in the emphatic lines, is dissipated in numerous counter-thrusts rather than being built into any kind of clear directional force. All of this disturbance, however, is held in check and translated into a very subtle visual experience by the subdued, wonderfully related colors.

The strong impression that cubist painting has made on Afro's work is evident in the use of lines and shapes which are reminiscent of Picasso, and his exquisite color brings to mind the taste and restraint of Braque. Cubism, since its historical beginning in the first decade of the twentieth century, has become something of a tradition in modern painting. Its principles have been broadly interpreted by individual artists in various ways. The cubist pioneers were specifically concerned with the cubic or volumetric aspect of the natural world, developing later into a more decorative phase that has been called "synthetic cubism." The "synthetic" style abandoned the problem of cubic volume but retained the principle of geometrizing natural forms, using them to create a flat



DISPETTO by AFRO, ITALIAN CONTEMPORARY
 Gift of John S. Newberry, Jr., 1950

pattern. Afro's painting falls in easily with this point of view. *Dispetto* presents the illusion of advancing and receding shapes but the planes upon which they lie are never clearly distinguished from the plane of the panel or from each other.

The cubists reconstructed natural forms into abstract compositions; we could speak more accurately of Afro's composing abstract shapes, in a distinctly non-objective idiom, so that they take on something of the conviction of nature. Nothing is specifically recognizable in *Dispetto* but Afro has achieved a sense of animation and cohesion in the central forms that suggests a living organism, a presence or a personage. It is surely much more than a decorative arrangement of shapes, however important a part this point of view plays in the painter's concept. Afro began his career as a painter of wall decorations and this experience is as indelibly impressed on his present work as his admiration for Picasso has been. The individual quality of his work lies in his assimilation of the principles of structure and surface decoration.

Technical virtuosity is not one of Afro's pressing concerns. Though he has used predominantly earth colors in *Dispetto*, often rather dark in tone, they are applied with great lightness and transparency. Oil pigments, diluted with large amounts of turpentine, create an effect very like that of a water color wash. Although Afro has actually used a combination of three media in this painting, oil, water color and tempera, the textures are those of the ground materials; he has not exploited the surface possibilities of the media to the same extent, for

instance, as has John Tunnard, whose work is the subject of another article in this Bulletin.

It is natural to try to find in a resurgent present some of the glories of a splendid past; a superficial search often ends in despair. But it is easier to find something of the clarity, discipline and harmony characteristic of Renaissance painting in the work of Afro than it is in the work of those painters whose purpose is more intensely "expressive."

A. F. PAGE

Cat. no. 1024. Height 13¼ inches; width 18⅞ inches. Gift of John S. Newberry, Jr., 1950. Acc. no. 50.250.

VENICE, NO. 5

A sculptor before the war, William Congdon has recently turned his attention to the achievement of extraordinary tactile effects in painting. Using tools instead of a brush, Congdon works his surface—one is tempted to say—like a farm. Wet, malleable pigment is troweled out and tamped down in large patches; dry crusts are plowed into furrows, the upturned paint deposited alongside in little crumbly heaps; here and there the shallow ditches flow with rivulets of liquid color; metallic powder settles dust-like over large areas.

Within these luxuriant and crustaceous tangles of paint, Congdon portrays exotic and mysterious visions of Mexico, Venice, New York City. Delicacy of form is sacrificed to direct and energetic expression. Representational elements are rough and crude abstractions, but their murky surfaces are alive with the glint of gold, silver, and pure color.

Venice, No. 5,¹ a recent addition to our collection of contemporary American painting, presents one of the artist's favorite subjects—the Piazza San Marco. Like the Impressionists before him, Congdon has been strongly attracted to the fabulous port. He presents, however, not a sophisticated atmospheric illusion of bright sun flickering on confectionary architecture and brilliant waters, but a primitive transcription of medieval opulence. To represent the sun and its light, Congdon returns to ancient metaphor—he uses gold paint. In shadows, where the Impressionists sought color, Congdon prefers the mystery of black.

In another view of the Piazza San Marco, Congdon has responded in almost impressionist fashion to the exotic splendor of the night—a glowing moon in a black sky, the scintillating facade of palace colonnades, the busy color of Florian's cafe—immobilizing it in an almost decorative sgraffito. But in our version, a more personal statement is projected upon the setting. The sun is a monstrous disk which bleeds its gold into dark facades; chaotic patches of gray, green, white and gold meet in conflict in the square and the sky. Empty and enormous, the square recedes in exaggerated perspective. Surface scoring follows no regular or calligraphic rhythm, but careens wildly in free scribbles and

irresponsible meanders. Whether consciously or not, in Venice, No. 5 Congdon abandons decorative unity for a willful and spectacular expression of personal energy.

VIRGINIA HARRIMAN

¹ Cat no. 1025. Height 46½ inches; width 19½ inches. Oil on masonite. Painted in 1950. Gift of John S. Newberry, Jr., 1951. Acc. no. 51.57.



VENICE NO. 5 by WILLIAM CONGDON, AMERICAN CONTEMPORARY
Gift of John S. Newberry, Jr., 1951

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ALEXANDER HAMILTON by ROBERT BALL HUGHES, *American* (1806-1868). Painted plaster; height 27 inches. Acc. no. 50.3. *Gift of the Gibbs-Williams Fund, 1951.* This is one of the few plaster casts of the model for one of Robert Ball Hughes' most important works. The original marble statue, erected in 1835 in the rotunda of the New York Merchants Exchange, was destroyed by fire soon after it was unveiled. It is said to have been "the first portrait figure sculptured in marble in this country."

